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SUBJECT Methods Utilized in Effecting Crossings of the Caspian Sea and Lake Ladoga by Petroleum Tank Cars
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SOURCE

1. In July and August 1942, during the summer attack of the German Army on northern Caucasasia and Stalingrad, I saw railroad tank cars, loaded with petroleum products, being towed on the Caspian Sea from Baku to Krasnovodsk.
2. Preparations for the crossing, the assembly of the echelon in the Caspian area, and the crossing itself came about in the following manner. At the end of June 1942, echelons of railroad tank cars, each with a carrying capacity of 16 tons, were assembled in Baku in the area between piers N 34 and N 43. Here rails were laid down into the water in such a manner that the wheels of a tank car did not rest on the ground and when the time came to float the tank car, one needed only to push the car from the bank into the water.
3. The following calculations were used in connection with the filling of the cars with petroleum products: The empty tank car with a carrying capacity of 16 tons weighs nearly 7-7.4 tons empty; filled completely with oil products the tank car, submerged in the water, displaces nearly 20-22 tons of water or as much as it weighs. Thus, to provide buoyancy to the tank car, it was filled with only five or six tons of petroleum products bringing its load weight to 10 or 12 tons and making the tank car floatable.
4. Before launching the tank cars into the water, measures were taken to insure safe coupling in order to avoid gaps in the caravan while crossing the sea. The cars themselves were hermetically sealed and the main bearings were covered with a heavy layer of thick oil (cup-grease). Tank car caravans consisted of from 30 to 40 cars, with a carrying capacity of around 180-250 tons of oil, which were towed across the sea, usually by a small steamer.
5. During the crossing, particular attention was paid to weather forecasts since stormy weather brings the risk of losing the caravan.
6. The tank cars were towed into Krasnovodsk in the area of the railroad station between piers N 4 and N 11. Here, as in Baku, there were rails leading from the shore into the water and the tank cars were pulled up onto the beach to be replenished for the trip to the Tashkent region.

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7. The crossings from Baku to Krasnovodsk, by tank car caravans with oil loads, continued for nearly two months (July and August), but were undertaken only in those exceptional cases when the delivery of oil products by sea through Astrakhan was difficult. Not only is this method of transportation illogical, it also causes rapid deterioration in the tank cars.
8. The crossing of one oil-laden caravan takes from 24 to 26 hours, and during the two months described here, 12-15 caravans with an ordinary carrying capacity of around 3,000 to 4,500 tons used this route. Later, oil products were shipped by tankers to Krasnovodsk through the Krasnovodsk roadstead and to Gurev by way of the Bautinsk roadstead.
9. The same method of transportation was used during September and October, 1941, on Lake Ladoga between Borisov Griva and Lavrova.

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ENCLOSURE (A): Sketch Showing the Launching of a Railroad Tank Car for the Caspian Sea Crossing

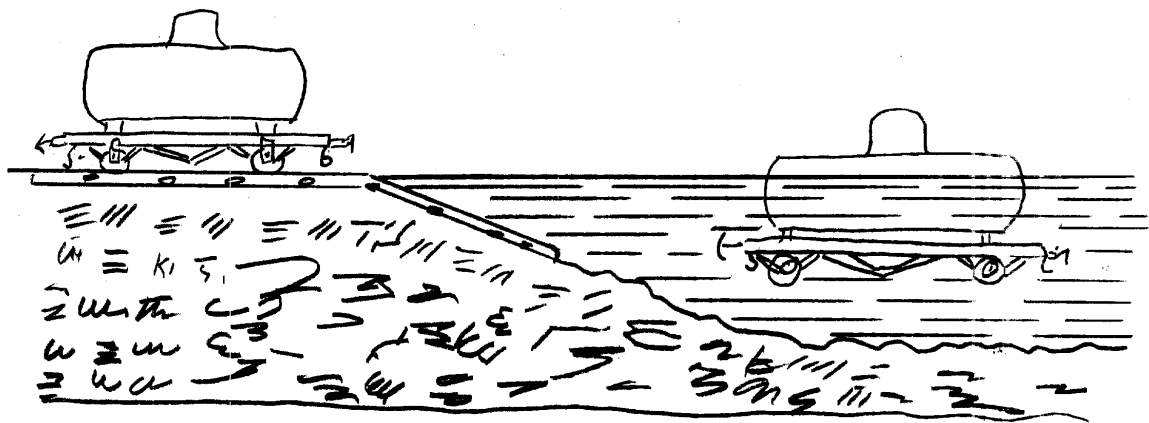
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ENCLOSURE (A)

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SKETCH SHOWING THE LAUNCHING OF A RAILROAD TANK CAR FOR THE CASPIAN SEA CROSSING

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